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LHDs Approaches to Deal with the Aftermath of Recession

April 27, 2015



A collaborative study including Dr. Gulzar Shah, Associate Dean for Research at the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health Georgia Southern University examines [Local Health Departments' \(LHDs\) approaches to deal with recession](#). (LHDs) are crucial components in the public health system. As with their state counterparts, operating since the 2008 recession has proven financially difficult for the majority of the nation's 2800 LHDs. These health departments have elected to employ a variety of strategies to maintain operations and public-facing services and programs. This study aimed to assess strategies used by LHDs to minimize the negative impact on services to community and to examine variation in these strategies by the size of population in LHD jurisdiction. LHDs use a variety of strategies to mitigate negative impacts on the public health services in their communities, focusing on workforce, funding, service referral, and several other areas. The most frequently used strategies include cross-training staff, increasing work hours, pursuing new funding, resource sharing, and seeking fees for services provided. Some minor variation by the size of jurisdiction population existed in frequency of top 10 strategies used by LHDs. Some of the LHD strategies to deal with the impact of recession address immediate issues caused by budget cuts and might be short-term fixes, including increasing workload of employees, and pay freezes. Other strategies, such as seeking new sources of revenues and resource sharing, can have potentially positive effects in the long run.